

Interviews

Interview Tips

Looking for a job is a full-time job. Many hours of work go into a successful job search campaign. The interview is a critical step toward the goal of employment. It is at the interview that the job is won or lost; it is where you show the employer your qualifications and show to the employer why you are the “best” candidate for the job.

An employment interview is simply a meeting between you and a potential employer to discuss your qualifications and see if there is a “fit.” An interview is an opportunity for an employer to see if you are a good fit with the position, department and company. It is also your opportunity to see if the employer is a good fit for you. The employer wants to verify what they know about you and talk about your qualifications. When you have been called for an interview, be confident that the employer knows you are already qualified for the position. The employer has a need and your goal in the interview is to identify that need and show, or “prove” that you are the one for the job and that you can add value to their bottom line.

Interviews can be stressful and the key to feeling confident is to be well prepared. Generally, interviews last from 30-60 minutes and most questions fall into standard categories. It is important to find out as much as possible about the interviewing process of a particular company before you go to the interview.



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES

Interview Preparation

Preparation is the key to success in a well-planned job search campaign. Preparation will help win the interview and will improve interview success. Begin by gathering all the information and documents important to the interview. Bring extra copies of our résumé, a list of references and letter(s) of recommendation. You may also want to bring school transcripts, licenses and certifications. Work samples are also powerful tools (e.g. designs, drawings, writings). Organize your information and documents in a portfolio, binder or folder to keep clean and accessible during the interview. Finally, bring a pen and pad of paper for taking notes.

The more you know about the job, the employer and the industry the better prepared you will be to target your qualifications. Up to this point in your job search, you have already been gathering some of this information. Now is the time to intensify your research and expand your knowledge. There are many sources of information. Ask the employer's human resources department for a more detailed position description. Research employer profiles on company web sites, at any Chamber of Commerce or local library. Network with anyone you know who works for the company or for a related company.

The next step is to match your qualifications to the requirements of the job. A good approach is to write out your qualifications along with the job requirements. Think about some standard interview questions and write down how you will respond. Most questions are designed to find out more about you, your qualifications and, or test your reactions to a given situation. If you lack experience or skills in a required area, plan how you can make up for those deficiencies. Part of preparation also includes role playing and practicing answers to questions—in person and over the phone, in case of a phone interview.

Preparation is key in
securing and completing a successful
job interview.

The Interview

The purpose of an interview is to become acquainted and learn about one another. The employer wants to learn how you “fit into the organization” and it is also an opportunity for you to evaluate the company. Employers use a variety of interview formats. There are series of interviews, panel interviews, phone interviews, or the traditional in-person interviews. Sometimes staff from the personnel or human resource departments will conduct an initial screening and the hiring authority will conduct the actual interview.

Be prepared to tell about yourself with a brief, meaningful introduction, sometimes referred to as a Work-related or Personal Commercial that highlights your skills, experience and qualifications tailored to the job.

During an interview, it is important that you be yourself. It is advised that you get a good night's sleep and plan your travel to arrive in plenty of time. However, you should present yourself for the interview no more than 15 minutes early. While you are waiting for your interview, get to know the office staff through small talk. Any connections made here could be a plus when the final hiring decision is being made.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS—The interview is a sales meeting and you are both the salesperson and the product. The basic question in every interview, whether it is asked or not, is “Why should I hire you?” All other questions center on this one issue. Basic interview questions can take a variety of forms. Generally, questions will ask about you, your qualifications, experience, skills and motivation. Be prepared for situational or behavior-based questions that require specific examples.

Listen carefully to each question asked in the interview. Take your time in responding and make sure your answers are positive. Express a good attitude and show that you are willing to work, eager to learn, and are flexible. If you are unsure of a question, ask for clarification. Sometimes a good strategy is to close a response with a question for the interviewer. If you have researched the company beforehand, you will be better informed and able to ask more in-depth questions.

Focus on your qualifications and also look for opportunities to personalize the interview. There is nothing wrong with injecting some personal insight into your life. However, do not get too personal or dwell too long on non-job related topics. Show your potential to the company. Support your answers with examples from your experience. Be prepared with research and a range if you are questioned about your

salary requirements. Also, clarify benefits, other compensations and be open to negotiating salary and benefits that create a win-win situation for you and the employer.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW—Close the interview in the same friendly, positive manner in which you started. Thank the interviewer(s) and if you want the job, say so. Summarize your qualifications again before leaving and offer references and other appropriate documents from your portfolio. Ask for business cards.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW—You will learn from each interview and become more confident from the experience. Evaluate the success, challenges and problem areas by asking yourself these questions:

- What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
- Did I present my qualifications well? Did I overlook a qualification that was important to the job?
- Did I learn all I wanted to know about the job and company?
- Did I talk too much? Too little?
- Was I assertive? Was I aggressive? Was I passive?
- Was I dressed appropriately?
- Did I effectively close the interview?

Finally, write a “thank-you” note or letter to each person who took part in the interview. An e-mail thank-you can also be appropriate if the time-frame is tight. Thank the interviewers for their time, restate your interest and qualifications for the job, and remind them of your intent to follow-up. Mail or e-mail the day of the interview.

Always continue to follow-up on the original position, or others that might be available. Being invited to an interview means that you qualified and have high potential. If you tweak your resume, streamline your job search and strengthen your interviewing skills, you could be #1 next time.

INTERVIEW TIPS

- Dress appropriately for the position—one step above what you would wear on the job.
- Shake hands and offer your résumé to each interviewer.
- Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview.
- Be aware of distracting behaviors like pen clicking, fidgeting and fiddling with objects.
- Listen carefully, be attentive, and take notes.
- Use the interviewers' names.
- Research the company and prepare questions.
- Be yourself; share positive, honest and skill-based answers.
- Practice role-playing in-person and on the phone.
- Do not discuss illegal or discriminatory subjects such as race, religion, age, national origin, or gender.

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